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## THEOLOGY AND ROMANTICISM

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The widespread reaction towards the Church of Rome by which the first half of the last century was marked, has been subjected to a multitude of more or less intelligent explanations. It was to be expected from poor human nature that each critic should explain in accordance with that law of human development which he had himself embraced, and in illustration of that moral which he deemed it most salutary to draw. In this field the disciple of Bossuet will be forever at issue with the disciple of Comte. From the one we hear how the eyes of Europe had been providentially opened by long years of anarchy and bloodshed, how the spirit of schism had been at length unmasked, how the exhausted nations were taught once more to value a unified spiritual control, and how amid the wreck of thrones and the desolation of kingdoms the very dullest of mankind must have been awed by the spectacle of the Chair of Peter standing fast, an authentic token of the Mighty Hand and the Outstretched Arm. From the other side we listen to the cold comment that world disasters are apt to drive back the less robust sort of mind to the solace of old superstition, that mental progress like all things human has its ebb and flow, and that we need not be surprised if a season of shivering credulity alternates with a season of fearless rationalism. The philosophic historian may well be left to wear himself out in this profitless debate with the brethren of his own craft. *Non nostri est tantas componere lites.*

But there is a side to the question which should repay more serious thought than it commonly receives. The recoil towards Rome was not merely a fact of history. It

was associated with a new and very suggestive type of theological and philosophical thinking, a type which extended itself far beyond the bounds of the Roman communion. Histories of literature dismiss the subject with the abrupt remark that we have here yet another aspect of the many-sided "Romanticism." But historians of literature are too seldom either philosophers or theologians, and they have left this very fruitful germ of thought quite undeveloped. No one could fail to suspect a common principle in two movements that were so nearly contemporaneous, that left so deep a mark upon just the same quarters of Europe, and that in so many cases were promoted by precisely the same men. Yet the common principle needs to be defined and limited with great care, unless it is to confuse rather than illumine the twin impulses, literary and religious, which it thus brings into relation.

For the *prima facie* resemblances are not more striking than the *prima facie* differences. For example, one could not select three men more typical of the Romantic spirit than Rousseau in France, Frederick Schlegel in Germany, and Coleridge in England. The religion of Jean Jacques was changed more than once, and whether we take as its characteristic expression the mystical reverences of the Savoyard vicar or the proposed State establishment of deism in the *Contrat Social*, we can detect little sign of renewed homage to the Holy See. It was as the author of *Lucinde*, the companion of the divorced Dorothea, and the bold apologist of *mariage à quatre*, that Schlegel was acclaimed by the Romanticists of Jena; not an auspicious beginning, one would say, for him who would re-subjugate the moral disorders of Protestantism to the government of an infallible Church. And if there is one tenet which, more constantly than any other, was proclaimed and emphasized by Coleridge, it was that of England's unique blessing among the distracted peoples of the Continent,

in her spiritual heritage of the Reformed faith. Nor does the later growth of the Romantic school in any one of these countries lend unqualified support to the view that it made for religious reaction. If in France it was championed by a Chateaubriand, it also found representatives in a de Musset, a Lamartine, and a Hugo. If in Germany it explains Stolberg and Tieck, it must also bear the load of Heine and Schopenhauer. If in England we count in its train a Wordsworth and a Keble, we must not omit a Shelley and a Swinburne.

Not less notable is the fact that Romantic influence was at work in the so-called "Broad" section of the Protestant churches. Schleiermacher was at least as much determined by it towards his religious individualism, his suspicion of mere intellect, and his reliance upon the data of feeling, as de Maistre towards a system of spiritual authority, under which the individual is controlled, reason monopolized, and the feelings often held in such restraint as to be virtually suppressed. A hundred years ago in the English Church the heresy that looks towards Rationalism was far oftener traced to Romantic sources than the heresy that looks towards Rome. The new ideas by which Maurice and his circle appalled one side and revivified another within the Anglican establishment had been mediated to themselves by Coleridge, but Coleridge's ultimate inspiration was in Königsberg and Jena.

Thus the threads are obviously tangled. At first sight it seems no less easy to maintain that a Romanticist as such would favor the liberal than that he would favor the conservative side in theological development. And if any general conclusion is to be reached, it must be by way of a very cautious analysis. One might almost predict that two results will follow: first, that Romanticism will reveal within itself elements not all of which were found in any single Romanticist, and of which some tended to reaction while others tended to progress; and, second,

that the common element, present in all Romanticists alike to whom the name is properly applied, acted in furtherance of that which modern liberal and modern conservative theology cherish alike. This may sound a truism. But I trust to be able to show that the historical considerations by which it is confirmed, so far from being truisms, are as yet quite insufficiently recognized as truths.

## I

Romanticism had its birth before the eighteenth century closed; yet if we describe it as “the revolt of the nineteenth century against the eighteenth,” we shall have spoken with a larger degree of justice than is usually compressed into an epigram. No doubt nature never makes a leap, and the zealots for continuity can point to many a foreshadowing of what was to come in the spiritual tendencies that were passing out of sight. But the passage marked by the calendar has seldom corresponded with such exactness to a real change of epoch. Three new ideas were especially in the air, and each of them was represented in some form by writers of the Romantic school. There was a startling and widely prevalent distrust in the strength of human reason. There was an immensely deepened interest in the past, and at least the beginning of a far more adequate appreciation of history. And there was the assertion as a definite principle of the trustworthiness of feeling, of instinct, of the “impulses of the heart,” against dialectic, ratiocination, intellectual “proof” or “disproof.”

In 1829 Carlyle wrote *Signs of the Times*, in which he reproached his age as having become utterly mechanical, as having lost its capacity for wonder, and as pinning its faith to empirical science. But John Stuart Mill had a far deeper insight into the time when he declared two rival forces to be working in English thought — Jeremy Bentham as the apostle of progress, and Coleridge as the

exponent of the "wisdom contained in the sacred traditions of the race." In the end the conservative influence proved no less significant than the radical. The two great Romantic poets who collaborated in the production of *Lyrical Ballads* were at once the representatives and the stimulators of a profound disbelief both in the perfecting of the world through science and in the salvation of souls through philosophy.

The general literature of the period has an unmistakable tone of despair both about the possibilities of higher knowledge and about the value of knowledge for life. Multitudes felt with Coleridge that metaphysic had become like the trees in the shadowy world of Vergil, bearing a dream upon every leaf.<sup>1</sup> Byron laughed at the builders of a new Babel, who were so much less honest than the builders of the old that they would not disperse even when no man could understand his neighbor.<sup>2</sup> Again and again in his poetry we meet with such laments as that all science is but the replacing of one sort of ignorance by another,<sup>3</sup> that the tree of knowledge has not fulfilled its promise,<sup>4</sup> that happiness can be the lot only of those like the sleeping babe in *Cain*, who have not plucked the fruit and know not they are naked. Such ideas of the so-called "Satanic" school are echoed by others with a very different purpose. Wordsworth would abjure imaginations high on questions deep,<sup>5</sup> bids us trust the simplicity of the child on whom those truths do rest which we are toiling all our lives to find,<sup>6</sup> and reminds us that wisdom is oftentimes nearer when we stoop than when we soar.<sup>7</sup> The advance of chemistry seems to have filled some minds a hundred years ago with just the same dread of *abiogenesis* which investigators such as Tyndall and Sir William Schäfer were destined to arouse among ourselves. Shel-

<sup>1</sup> *The Statesman's Manual*.

<sup>5</sup> *Excursion*. Vol. III.

<sup>2</sup> *The Deformed Transformed*. Vol. II.

<sup>6</sup> *Intimations of Immortality*.

<sup>3</sup> *Manfred*. Vol. II, p. iv.

<sup>7</sup> *Prelude*. Vol. II.

<sup>4</sup> *Cain*. Vol. I, p. i.

ley's furtive research with test tubes was spoken of as a presage of his atheistic future, and his wife's *Frankenstein* was composed with the avowed object of horrifying. The myth about the gift of fire to mankind and the consequences for both weal and woe that had resulted from it, began again to haunt the imagination. Rousseau's first *Discours* on the uselessness of the arts had no more suggestive page than that presenting an emblematic vignette — the torch of science being handed to men by Prometheus, who warns a satyr that it burns.

In France also philosophic enthusiasm in the old sense was waning. The return of the Bourbons had indeed been followed by a relaxation of that iron censorship upon literature which Napoleon, who did nothing by halves, had used to entrench his own authority. Voltaire, Diderot, D'Alembert might be read again. But those who continued the traditions of the *Encyclopédie* were men like Cabanis, reducing thought to a secretion of the brain and poetry to a function of the smaller intestines, or missionaries from outside like Gall and Spurzheim, preaching the significance of bumps on the skull as a clue to capacities of character. One here and there, like Maine de Biran or Jouffroy, attempted a more adequate account of consciousness than had satisfied a D'Alembert and a Condillac, and for a time it seemed possible that psychology was about to lead its investigators beyond itself. But on the whole, French thought avoided the ultimate issues, limiting itself to such work as the empirical tabulation of correspondences between mental and neutral phenomena.

In Germany alone, as has been so often pointed out, the fine frenzy of metaphysic survived. There the ampler philosophic minds retained a faith in the competence of intellect for ultimate problems, and there for at least a few pioneers Romanticism and Intellectualism were not found incompatible. In 1807 Hegel published his *Phaenomenologie des Geistes*, in 1816 his *Logik*, and in 1817 his

*Encyclopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften.* Probably never before or since has the complete adequacy of reason for any task that might fall to it been asserted at once so explicitly, so daringly, and on the whole so productively. "Metaphysic," said Novalis, "bakes no bread, but it can give us God, Freedom, and Immortality." It was the supposed allegiance of Fichte and Goethe to the same conviction which misled Carlyle into acclaiming them as the restorers to mankind of a faith which the Encyclopædist had almost destroyed. Whether Hegel rendered a real service of this kind to the church is still matter of dispute between the Hegelian "Right" and the Hegelian "Left." And as early as 1811 in Germany itself the school of Jacobi was in revolt against transcendental idealism, declaring the intellect forever incompetent when acting alone for those problems which it most concerns us to solve.

A second main idea to which the men of the Romantic impulse gave expression was a deepened feeling for history. The hard rationalists of the classical tradition had been far too contemptuous of the past to be at any pains in understanding it. It had been a time when Pope's *Homer* was much admired, with its chariot of Priam conceived like the equipage of an English noble, and when formal French tragedy had its Iphigeneias and its Andromaches decked out in the mode of the Rue de la Paix. Glib talk had gone round about a social contract in which primitive men had decided after public debate that Civilization should now incorporate itself, and the articles of indenture which bound the individual to the State had been so drawn that no attorney could find a flaw. Such anachronisms could have had no vogue at all except at a time of profound historical ignorance and no historical sympathy. The life and ideals of one period were freely projected into another, and bygone ages were reconstructed with the utmost arbitrariness to buttress some

favorite dogma or programme. As Lord Morley says in speaking of Rousseau, history was less a teacher than the meagrely nourished handmaid of the imagination.

The revulsion from a period in which men spoke of believing only what they could see produced a new sympathy with that long-derided time when it was the pride of faith to leave evidence far behind. Imaginative writing which brought back again donjons and cloisters, crusades and troubadours, was welcomed with an almost childish delight. The rage in England for Scott's mediæval romances and Byron's pictures of life under a Venetian Doge was typical of the time, though it was no less typical of the prosaic English mind that such a mood passed rapidly away. In France an Alfred de Vigny revived once more the faded glories of the old feudal aristocrat, and a Hugo denounced the profane modernizers of the fabric of *Nôtre Dame*. Carlyle complained that even German literature had come to be thought of as dealing only with wizards and ruined towers, with mailed knights, secret tribunals, monks, spectres, and banditti.<sup>8</sup> Yet even this extravagance was symptomatic of a nascent feeling for history. For it implied a broader conception of the possible sources from which the past could be recovered, and a truer standpoint from which its movements could be appreciated.

This discord between the tone of the two centuries, appearing almost at the moment of transition from the one to the other, is among the great significant things in the history of thought. We must not, indeed, fall into the error of giving the whole credit to Romanticism, least of all if we take the type of all Romanticists to have been Rousseau. It would be a strange estimate of historical progress which should find in the author of *Contrat Social* an improver of the historical blemishes in Robertson or Gibbon. But the sympathetic feeling for mankind as such

<sup>8</sup> *State of German Literature (1827)*.

by which that famous book was inspired was destined sooner or later to make the past an object of more searching scrutiny, and to outlive its own first blundering embodiments. The word "romantic" is perhaps ill chosen to describe the new spirit that spread over Europe just one hundred years ago, but it has the sanction of long usage, and for want of a better it may still serve. Alike in art, in literature, in philosophy, in religion, a single impulse had revealed itself. It was the impulse to look backward rather than forward, reverence for the primitive, distrust of "march of intellect," a dim yet insistent faith that there had been no age of darkness towards which a philosophic age of light could rightly be contemptuous, a suspicion that science was about to overleap its limits to the eternal undoing of the human spirit, a passionate return to the natural instincts against the artificial contrivances of an arrogant Reason.

## II

How did these tendencies act upon theology? When one's despair of human knowledge is intensified, his appreciation of history deepened, and his new respect for feeling supersedes his old respect for reasoning, will he become more amenable or less amenable to the direction of the church? The result is sure to vary in part at least with individual temperament.

We know how Shelley used to speak about the disappointment of the friends of intellectual progress. But Shelley was not typical. There was a widespread belief that authority is mankind's sole refuge, and it was inevitable that in France return to authority should mean return to Rome. Some of the leaders of this movement were priests, and — at least until the July Revolution of 1830 — the sacerdotal hand is conspicuous in French politics. Monasteries were restored, sacrilege was punished with a rigor almost unknown since the Middle

Ages, even the applicant for poor-law relief was required to produce his certificate of attendance at confession. The divine right of the monarchy was reasserted by Polignac, the last minister who served the ill-fated Charles X, and whose constantly recurring visions confirmed his faith that he was himself appointed by God to restore the kingship and the Church. It is an obvious suggestion that all this was the work of Jesuits, and we know well that the Jesuits as usual were busy. But the two most important figures for our present purpose were both laymen, one a cultivated diplomat of the old *noblesse*, who for fourteen years represented the Sardinian kingdom at the Russian capital, the other a man of letters, formerly an emigrant of the Revolution, but afterwards high in favor at the restored court of Louis XVIII, and for many years French Minister of Public Instruction. Both were reactionary in politics, eager to reestablish autocratic rule in things spiritual no less than in things temporal, and ready to take advantage of that failure of public nerve which gave its chance to the propaganda of absolutism.

De Maistre is very generally known to all students of the period, and it is needless to recall his famous argument in *Du Pape* or in the *Soirées de Saint Petersbourg*. We have the usual picture of that moral anarchy which calls for a supreme spiritual head, even as political anarchy can be dealt with only by a supreme head of the state. We have the usual arraignment of that whole theory of life which, according to the Roman view, had begun at the Renaissance, developed in Lutheranism, found its expositors in the *Encyclopédie*, and reached its practical culmination in the September massacres.<sup>9</sup> But, although

<sup>9</sup> How persuasive this line of thought appeared, even to some thinkers who never joined the Roman Church, may be seen from A. W. Schlegel's letter to M. de Montmorency: "The Protestant system does not satisfy me any longer. . . . I am convinced that the time is not far off when all Christians will reunite in the old faith. The work of the Reformation is accomplished, the pride of human reason which was evident

much less familiar than these books by De Maistre, the *Recherches Philosophiques* by the Vicomte de Bonald can cast more significant light on the movement of thought that was in progress. The author concentrates attention on two facts, of which each taken by itself is quite intelligible but whose combination is a curious enigma. The first is the prolonged failure of philosophy to reach any secure solution of its cosmic problems, a failure which in the hopeless discord of philosophers from Thales to Kant seemed long since as well attested as historical evidence could make it. The second is the unquenchable ardor with which, despite the disappointments of two thousand years and the demonstrated impotence of our intellectual machinery for the task, mankind refuses to draw the inference that seems so obvious, and the fruitless effort continues to be tried again. The rolling of the stone of Sisyphus was no mere poet's dream; it was rather a quite inadequate parable of the metaphysician's sublime folly.

How is this persisting impulse to be explained? De Bonald suggests that the human mind had imprinted upon it at the beginning certain truths of capital importance for moral and social development. Providence, duty, future rewards and punishments, were ideas not reached by reasoning, but implanted — as Descartes said about the notion of an Infinite Being — by God Himself upon our race at the first. The mythopoetic imagination corrupted them, and the grotesque legends by which they became overlaid called for that repudiation with which philosophy has been so copious. But philosophy destroyed good and evil alike. It discredited not only the myths but the principle round which the myths had grown up. It presumed, for example, to demand proof

in the first Reformers, and still more in their successors, has guided us so ill, especially during the last century, that it has come into antagonism with itself and has destroyed itself. It is perhaps ordained that those who have influence on the opinions of their contemporaries shall publicly renounce it, and then assist in preparing a union with the one Church of former days."

for that purposive structure of the universe which must be assumed as often as we prove anything, and which consequently cannot itself be proved at all. Small wonder then that *petitio principii* should abound in theistic argument. "We take within ourselves the resting-place on which we want to climb up; in a word, we gauge our own thought by itself, which puts us in the position of a man who wished to weigh himself without scales or weights. Playthings of our own illusions, we interrogate ourselves, and we take the echo of our own voice for the response of truth." Thus for De Bonald the spiritual anarchies of private judgment are like the social anarchies of individualism. In speculations purely theoretical, like some parts of astronomy for instance, each inquirer has to depend on his own gift of reasoning. But in ascertaining the truths by which we have to *live*, no such desperate task is laid upon us. We are not forced to make an independent chemical analysis before we eat our food, and neither have we to conduct for ourselves a logical investigation into the ultimate things we are to believe. The Most High has implanted convictions in mankind for the life of the spirit, just as He has made the earth yield her fruit for the life of the body. In each case tradition, common consent, verification by long trial, are our sufficient guides.

De Bonald is a most persuasive writer, and, if he were better known, much of his argument would have a cordial reception from the anti-intellectualists of our own time. Mr. A. J. Balfour's defense of authority, for example, is at many points almost indistinguishable from it. Ten years after the publication of *Recherches Philosophiques*, and probably in complete ignorance not only of its tenor but even of its existence, the youthful Newman hit upon just the same line of thought. A speculative system of Traditionism became elaborated. And it was but natural that where reason fell into such disrepute credulity should

advance by leaps and bounds. The view that the Most High looks with disfavor upon mental shrewdness, that He has actually taken means by frustrating the struggles of intellect to drive us back upon a higher oracle, had the result of re-establishing the mediæval notion of belief as a virtue, and of the mind's virtuousness as proportioned to its receptivity. It is not strange, of course, that in Catholic countries a hundred years ago the illiterate and the unscientific should have been willing to accept every sort of marvel. But it does seem a little odd that in Paris itself, as late as the middle of the last century, educated people should have had no critical sense at all when a saint's wonder-working was reported. Mark Pattison found on a visit there in 1843 that in religious circles every miracle was believed just because it was miraculous, that the idea of truth seemed to have vanished, that whatever tended to the Church's glory was taken as self-evident, and all else dismissed as "a fiction of the Voltairians."<sup>10</sup> Minds of the highest training and of the finest endowment among the Catholic laity had abjured the whole lesson of the French and German Enlightenment, and had reopened to all kinds of ecclesiastical myth with a readiness like that of the Channel Islanders in Hugo's *Travailleurs de la Mer*. The reaction in England was no less striking. It was actually the same man who wrote *The Idea of a University* and who defended the tale of the liquefaction of St. Januarius's blood; the same who produced *A Grammar of Assent* and who gave thanks for the *grazia* that had been vouchsafed in the healing of disease through the relics of St. Philip Neri; the same who shivered Charles Kingsley to fragments in one of the keenest of dialectical encounters and who exulted in the thought of the Virgin's joy in Paradise when she knew that her immaculate conception had been decreed by Pius IX. In these matters Newman was no extremist, rather a moderate Catholic, the culti-

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Pattison's *Memoirs*, pp. 211, 212.

vator of a "wise and gentle minimism." Compared with men like Louis Veuillot he seems almost a freethinker. And he had certainly none of the diabetic thirst for the supernatural which marked such a zealot as W. G. Ward.

Herein a problem confronts those who would explain so curious a union of mental strength and mental subservience. Its strangeness is immensely reduced when we remember that the presupposition which for most of us renders at least a modern miracle wholly incredible had been swept out of sight for the men with whom we are here dealing, and that they were thoroughly logical in pursuing their new view to its last consequence. That the sun should have stood still on Gibeon and the moon in the valley of Ajalon had scarcely for them any greater antecedent improbability than that an earthly monarch should suspend a law by order in council. If such things were done for Joshua, why should not similar interference be witnessed still? If Ward and his friends had been as muddle-headed as the average, they would no doubt have taken refuge in the very popular expedient of first acknowledging a principle and then ignoring it. What Matthew Arnold called the withering of miracle at the breath of the *Zeitgeist* had no existence for them. They had faced the *Zeitgeist*, had definitely repudiated it, and were resolved that it should not further influence them unawares. To a Frederick Schlegel or a Tieck what we call marvels were common occurrences. They had brought back again into the atmosphere they breathed that vision of Moore:

"When earth was nearer to the skies  
Than in these days of crime and woe,  
And mortals saw without surprise  
In the mid air angelic eyes  
Bending upon this world below."<sup>11</sup>

Again, a deepened historical imagination, combined with relaxed severity of historical criticism, obviously

<sup>11</sup> *Loves of the Angels.*

favored a new view of the old Church. This revealed itself in one respect which strikes the observer now as supremely absurd. The Reformation began to be resented on purely *artistic* grounds, for it had broken the spell under which the finest æsthetic masterpieces had been achieved. It had been lacking in that "sweetness" which Matthew Arnold demanded as the accompaniment of "light." Franz Horn roundly declared that no one can be a poet unless he is a Christian, nor does he condescend even to explain away the somewhat plausible poetic claims of a Sophocles or a Lucretius.<sup>12</sup> The natural inference was drawn by those artists who were by nature far from religious but who thought of Catholicism as Christianity raised to its highest power. Heine tells us with a savage sneer that swarms of German painters were turning papists because they felt that the greatness of a Fra Angelico depended on his belief in the sacred objects he depicted, and they hoped that if they too could school their souls to a Roman devoutness they might recover the lost secret of mediæval art.<sup>13</sup> Such a variation of the "will to believe" was probably never contemplated by William James, but the craftsmen of the brush have seldom been careful about their logic. The Aufklärung was condemned as philistinism, and recoil from the Aufklärung, with whatever intellectual change this might involve, became the artistic creed.

One is struck too with the discontent with traditional histories of the Protestant Reformation that began to spread so rapidly in England. It appeared in many a surprising quarter, it was expressed by men who had not the least dogmatic sympathy with the Church of Rome,

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Carlyle's comment in *State of German Literature*: "The meaning here is very good; but why this phraseology? Is it not inviting the simple-minded (not to speak of scoffers, whom Horn very justly sniffs at) to ask when Homer subscribed the Thirty-Nine Articles; or whether Sadi and Hafiz were really of the Bishop of Peterborough's opinion?"

<sup>13</sup> Essay on "The Romantic School" in the *Review Europe Littéraire* (1833).

it began even to be turned to purposes of political intrigue by those who cared nothing for it in itself but whose choice of it as a weapon attests its congeniality with the mood of the hour. William Cobbett cannot be suspected of having been — in Charlotte Brontë's bitter phrase — a “tool of the Propaganda,”<sup>14</sup> for Propaganda would have found reason for sore offense in many a passage of the *Political Register*. Nor can Benjamin Disraeli have been such, as *Lothair* is enough to remind us, for he was much more given to fashioning a tool for himself out of whatever popular sentiment his lynx eye detected, and he must have seen a real chance in the anti-Reformation spirit which he voiced in the years of his political apprenticeship. And if anyone suspects a leaning to Romanism in Thomas Carlyle, it will be enough to refer to his *Cromwell* or to his *Historical Sketches* in almost any chapter which one opens by chance. Yet these three so widely different men began to celebrate once more the blessings of monastic rule, to set it in favorable contrast with the age of brass in which they were themselves so unfortunate as to live, and thus indirectly to win a new respect for the sort of faith under which monasticism had been possible. *Sybil* suggests to us a most unorthodox view of the glorious Revolution of 1688. The Lord of Marney Abbey is there spoken of as having joined with other Whig nobles to call over the Prince of Orange, because of a general alarm among the aristocrats that their landed interest was in peril. There was “a prevalent impression that King James intended to insist on the restitution of the Church estates to their original purpose, to wit, the education of the people and the maintenance of the poor.”<sup>15</sup> Cobbett, filled with the idea that in the good old days tithe had been applied to the relief of distress, that under feudalism the lords spiritual and lords temporal had cared for those whom *laissez faire* would permit to starve, and that in

<sup>14</sup> Shirley. Vol. I.

<sup>15</sup> Sybil. Vol. I, p. iii.

particular the abbots and priors had acted as a kind of earthly providence to their children, produced a *History of the Reformation* at which men like Thomas Arnold stood aghast.<sup>16</sup> Its burden, to use the lurid language of the author, was that the change in the sixteenth century had been "engendered in beastly lust, brought forth in hypocrisy, cherished and fed by plunder and devastation and by rivers of English and Irish blood." Even Carlyle, in fierce disgust with the radical poor-law, the gospel of unrestricted competition, and the creed of "No Government," set up in contrast the benevolent régime of an old Catholic monastery, with a real governor of men at its head: "This is Abbot Samson's Catholicism of the twelfth century; somewhat like the *ism* of all true men in all centuries, I fancy! Alas, compared with any of the *isms* current in these poor days, what a thing."<sup>17</sup>

None of these authors, except the last, can be definitely classified as a Romanticist, but they had caught the spirit which the Romantic movement had diffused. The Industrial Revolution was typical of an age of contract and individualism, just as feudal manners belonged to the age of status and the clan. The new-born middle class marked that breach with the past which no good Romanticist could bear, and it found its natural defenders in men like Mill who inherited the tradition of the *Encyclopédie*, just as it found its natural assailants in men like Carlyle to whom the *Encyclopédie* was anathema. What Disraeli called the "spirit of rapacious covetousness"<sup>18</sup> and "the Altar of Mammon blazing with triple worship"<sup>19</sup> stimulated comparison with a remote golden age of priestly benevolence that was, no doubt, largely mythical. Charles Kingsley, though he had no patience with compliments to pre-Reformation days, did not scruple to join in the onslaught upon the "Fathers of the Scrip Church"<sup>20</sup> who

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Stanley's Life of Arnold, p. 59.

<sup>17</sup> Past and Present.

<sup>19</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>18</sup> Sybil. Vol. I, p. iii.

<sup>20</sup> The phrase is from Dickens.

were leading modern industrialism, and declared his own to be perhaps the most sensual generation since Alaric sacked Rome.<sup>21</sup> Mill felt impelled to insert in his *Principles of Political Economy* a reference to the "would-be revivers of old times which they do not understand," pointing out that the fabric of patriarchal and seignorial influence which it was proposed to restore would be shattered against the necessity of enforcing a stringent Poor Law.<sup>22</sup> Even Macaulay was so moved by Manzoni's picture of the ancient church as to record in his diary that he had read it with tears, and that if he could believe it to be a true representation of what the Roman communion had been, he should be tempted to follow Newman's example.<sup>23</sup> We realize perhaps best of all how keen was the new antagonism, and how strangely it affected historical judgments, when we find so fanatical a Protestant as the editor of *Cromwell's Letters* turning aside to glorify the government of a mediæval monk.

### III

But there was another and a very different side to Romanticism, a side so prominent that the historians of literature dwell upon it almost to the exclusion of the tendencies we have mentioned. It was the glorifying of impulse as against reason, of the individual as against controlling authority, of self-fulfilment and self-expression as against self-denial and self-restraint. Not all the Romanticists had this spirit in equal degree, and Goethe, who in some of his work may be looked upon as its prophet, had that other mood at times in which he counseled *Entsagung*, and led some admirers to mistake him for a preacher of the Cross. Nor did the Romanticists originate, they rather developed and insisted upon that apotheosis of the feelings which we can trace back to the moral-sense school of the

<sup>21</sup> Cf. *Life and Letters of Charles Kingsley*. Vol. I, p. 38.

<sup>22</sup> *Pol. Econ.* Vol. IV, p. vii.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. *Trevelyan's Life*.

eighteenth century. A few of them, like Coleridge, were even keenly alive to its dangers, regarding the sentimentalism of Sterne as more likely to corrupt the conscience than the materialism of Hobbes.<sup>24</sup>

Strange as it may sound to us now, Germany was once the special home of this law-defying individualism, with all its merits and all its faults. Professor Georg Brandes in a very memorable passage written almost twenty years ago, and whose poignant truthfulness we have had sad reason to appreciate, called attention to the contrast between the Berlin of 1900 and the Berlin of a century earlier. He observed that the capital in our own time was crowded with men in uniform, the literature in its book-shops was intensely practical, the very furniture and ornaments on display spoke of the flowing tide of militarism. Clocks were decorated, not as of old with knights kneeling to kiss a lady's finger-tips, but with uhlans and cuirassiers clicking their heels together on parade. The pendant of a watch-chain was a conical bullet, and candelabra were formed of piled muskets. "The metal in fashion is iron," said Professor Brandes; "The word in fashion is also iron."<sup>25</sup> Yet this regimented nation once gloried in the boast of *Freigeisterei*. The circle of Goethe and Schiller at Weimar believed in nothing so much as in the defiance of restraint and the exalting of "nature" above "convention." Jean Paul, Wieland, and a host of others preached the same gospel with their pens, and did not scruple to set the new example in their practice. Carlyle's strange delusion that the German people was to become Europe's regenerator in virtue may be met by a far more

<sup>24</sup> Cf. *Aids to Reflection*. Vol. I, p. 26. "All the evil achieved by Hobbes and the whole school of materialists will appear inconsiderable if it be compared with the mischief effected and occasioned by the sentimental philosophy of Sterne and his numerous imitators. The vilest appetites and the most remorseless inconstancy towards their objects acquired the titles of *the heart*, *the irresistible feelings*, *the too tender sensibility*; and if the frosts of prudence, the icy chains of human law, thawed and vanished at the genial warmth of human nature, who could help it? It was an amiable weakness!"

<sup>25</sup> *Main Currents of Nineteenth Century Literature*. Vol. II, p. 17.

plausible argument that that race was to illustrate in turn the diverse excesses of immoralism — first the variety which springs from a frantic assertion of the personal ego, then the variety which comes from a cringing submission to the dominant *Reich*. If Treitschke was to be the apostle of the latter, Max Stirner was the apostle of the former.

Yet enthusiasm for what was called “return to nature” is perhaps the most characteristic common element in the Romanticists, and “nature” was curiously identified with the emotional rather than the ratiocinative impulse in mankind. It was an odd reaction against a still odder myth, the myth endorsed by Warburton when he said that “the image of God in which man was at first created lay in the faculty of reason only.” The prevalent view that Rousseau was responsible for all the absurdities of this contrast between the “natural” and the “developed” does far less than justice — as can be easily shown — to the teaching either of *Emile* or of the *Contrat Social*. Yet Rousseau’s recurring doctrine, that the kindly tendencies of nature are thwarted and perverted by artificial restraint, lent itself to that ideal of wayward autonomy which his successors and imitators were so keen to recommend. Not only positive codes, but every sort of agreed convention became an object of contempt. The vagaries of what is now called “free love” acquired a sort of sentimental sanctity. The English reader of Swinburne and of Oscar Wilde will recognize at once how this side of the Romantic movement developed.

Perhaps Wordsworth affords the clearest illustration from our own literature of that winsome Nature-cult in which the first Romanticists delighted, a cult which has always such seductive appeal for the young, and which is so apt to persist in those whose advance in years has been accompanied by no corresponding advance in thought. Nature was for Wordsworth in early life the one instruct-

ress in virtue; the world of sense, whose glories were welcomed with a childlike responsiveness, had no need of being interpreted by reason, and those who tried to prescribe for the developing mind its course in books were like sham physicians who pretend to teach the body how to grow. The "speaking face of earth and heaven" was man's all-sufficient guide. The poet himself had been allowed in childhood to cull such flowers of learning as might tempt a random choice. He was contented if he might enjoy the things which others understand. And his programme for Lucy in *Lyrical Ballads* was formed on a like principle. The floating clouds and the bending willow and the motions of the storm should be her training school; she should learn composure from the silence and the calm of mute insensate things; the stars of midnight should become dear to her, and among winding rivulets the beauty born of murmuring sound should pass into her face. Twenty years afterwards Wordsworth explained the wickedness of Peter Bell by the fact that "Nature" could never find her way into that young reprobate's heart, that the changes of the seasons somehow conveyed to him no moral truth, and that to his seared soul a primrose by the river's brim was nothing more than a yellow primrose! He was led to wonder whether the waywardness of mankind did not spring less from the fact that we are poor observers than from the misfortune that the things we have a chance to observe are often insufficient for our education. Was Peter so evil because he was divorced in spirit from what he saw, or because he saw Nature's less inspiring moods, for "Peter Bell and she had often been together"? Perhaps his savageness even arose from the savage character of mountains and of dreary moors? And the poet confesses that he has himself come to look on Nature, not as in the hour of thoughtless youth, but hearing oftentimes the still sad music of humanity. He throws out a hint that many of us need a direction

from stern conscience as well as the genial influence of earth and heaven. This is just the imposed morality that Romanticists had so derided, but for most of them return to Nature did not thus eventuate in return beyond Nature. Shelley's mocking voice in *Peter Bell the Third* warned us not to exchange the buoyant inspiration of wood and stream for the things that "old parsons say in burying-grounds."

#### IV

To ground the church's authority upon the failures of unassisted intelligence is a form of apologetic that has been much abused. Theologians have again and again bethought themselves that the impotence of reason might thus be exploited. That ignorance can be made the mother of devotion is a tenet widely imputed to the Church of Rome. Most of us, however, have heard many a Protestant sermon in which the disappointments of philosophic inquiry were not less exultantly emphasized, and the inference of an infallible Book was drawn with just the same logic that led Manning to an infallible pontiff. An Anglican divine of great note some sixty years ago had even the daring to deride the moral consciousness itself, to parade the antinomies as a schoolmaster to bring us back to faith, and to find in the hopelessness of agnosticism a basis for Christian humility. Edward Caird used to warn us against this sort of argument. He called it seeking a place for religion in the *lacunae* of science. In our own day we have met with those whose reply to the evolutionists has consisted only in dwelling upon the notorious "gaps," and we have seen such ground often crumble beneath their feet. The satisfaction with which men once noted the fact of a "missing link" and the alarm with which the possibility of its appearance was anticipated, find a parallel just now in the anxiety with which the rumor of a chemical production

of life is still whispered among the fearful. To rejoice in the break-down of the human mind as it labors unhelped, and to expect from its humiliation a mood of deeper submissiveness to external control, is to forget that reason and faith are alike sons of God, and that disrespect to either is disrespect to both.<sup>26</sup> Theological champions who thus plan their campaign might well lay to heart the aphorism of Coleridge, that the same truth is at once shield and bow, and that as a disputant plucks the weapon from his wound he has often to recognize an arrow from his own quiver.<sup>27</sup>

Yet there was a value in that same Romantic distrust of intellect, just as there is a value in Professor Bergson's similar scepticism about reasoning at the present day. Adverse and often exasperated critics see nothing in either but a new credulity. But to a great extent it is the critics rather than the criticized who are credulous. Men may, indeed, still think that the sole road to truth was that of the *Encyclopédie*, and that — as Carlyle put it — there is in reality "no truth except that which can be argued of."<sup>28</sup> They may think that there are no ultimate convictions necessary to man's life and thought, attested by that very necessity as trustworthy, unless we are to suppose the universe a chaos and our own quenchless belief in its order an inexplicable delusion, yet incapable of proof just because all proof begins there and so cannot lead thither. Or they may think that these indispensable convictions can still be securely held and confidently acted upon without any preference for that cosmic scheme which is alone reconcilable with them over other cosmic schemes which undoubtedly contradict them. That there are minds of this cast is a fact of which philosophy must take notice, somewhat sadly. But they are credulous minds, and they are a little too apt to measure the develop-

<sup>26</sup> Cf. A. M. Fairbairn, *The Philosophy of the Christian Religion*.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. *Aids to Reflection*. Vol. I, p. 182.

<sup>28</sup> *Essay on Diderot*.

ment of others by their own capacity for incoherence. They have still need to learn that new and deeper psychology of belief so admirably summarized by Dean Church, and for which many had to thank the men of the Tractarian Movement: "that not arguments only, but the whole condition of the mind to which they are addressed — and not the reasonings only which could be stated, but those which went on darkly in the mind, and which 'there was not at the moment strength enough to bring forth,' real and weighty reasons which acted like the obscure rays of the spectrum, with their proper force yet eluding distinct observation — had their necessary and legitimate place in determining belief."<sup>29</sup> For this idea the Oxford men owed, through Coleridge, more than they themselves knew to the Romanticists.

Again, we have long been accustomed to hear from Protestant quarters that the greatest enemy of the Church of Rome is the impartial historian. One cannot help feeling, for example, that if Lord Acton had known less history than he did, so devoutly religious a mind would have been less recalcitrant when the pontiff so long held in reverence imposed as *de fide* an acceptance of the Vatican Decrees. But the judgment of historians upon the claim of the Holy See has been found as variable as Bacon found the judgment of science upon Christian faith. To adapt the famous aphorism, we may admit that a little history inclines one to Rome, while we insist that more history drives one far from her.

The present writer, at least, has long looked with a measure of sympathetic appreciation upon those for whom, one hundred years ago, the glamor of the Papacy was restored. De Maistre was a witness as opportune as Dante five centuries before, to the spiritual independence of the Church. The Concordat by which Pius VII purchased imperial favor at the price of conceding the Gal-

<sup>29</sup> Church, *The Oxford Movement*, p. 256.

lican liberties may be excused as a yielding to *force majeure*, but on the face of it looks as simoniacal a transaction as ever disgraced the administration of Boniface VIII. It may be incredible that the Most High has appointed a human vicegerent to bear spiritual rule from a single centre to the ends of the earth. But it is at least not more absurd, and it is vastly less incoherent, than to think of "national" Churches, each one of which has been endowed with the awful power to bind and to loose, but each one of which must at the same time exercise its solemn function in strict subservience to the temporal authority of the State.<sup>30</sup> Against such a travesty of sacred things every word that was spoken by Lamenais, by Montalembert, by Lacordaire, was a word for truth and earnestness. We see the same healthy resentment in Schleiermacher's protest against a State-imposed Prussian liturgy. If there is an apostolic succession — as Lambeth no less than Rome maintains — then the apostles who transmit it are surely no mere subordinates of the discordant civil powers, or mouthpieces of the dominant national feeling. Something quite different from either loyalty or patriotism must be the first of their concerns. How sorely a counteractive was needed for the Erastianism of the hour may be seen from some ecclesiastical arrangements recorded in the contemporary literature. The practice of the fallen French Empire had become a model in many things, and beyond doubt Napoleon had his national clergy well in hand. We hear, for example, of one preacher who was supposed to be delivering lectures on theism, and who was specially expert in devising the *double entendre* by which compliments to the emperor might be insinuated in the language of devout-

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Thackeray's extraordinary outburst in the Irish Sketch Book against the Pope's appointment of an English bishop to the see of "Aureliopolis," and his query about what His Holiness would think if the Archbishop of Canterbury nominated a bishop of the Palatine or the Suburra! It illustrates the mood in which Churches were regarded as pieces of national organization.

ness. Even he, however, failed to come up to the standard, for Fouché, acting on Napoleon's behalf, pointed out that a really patriotic address on the existence of God should contain some words in support of military conscription. The catechism was recast by imperial order, questions were inserted on the duty of Frenchmen to the chief of their State, and it was intimated in the answers that he who failed not only to obey but to "love" Napoleon would be eternally damned! When in defiance of the Holy See all manner of State-nominated bishops were thrust into dioceses, the clergy were forbidden to express the smallest disapproval, and on one occasion two hundred and thirty-six seminarists who had refused to assist at the mass of an imperial bishop were at once unfrocked and drafted into a regiment. Priests, like all others, were to be "hundred-per-cent Frenchmen, Frenchmen first, last, and all the time." Such records help one to understand the strange declaration of that other "constitutional priest," Cimourdain in Hugo's *Quatre-vingt-treize*, "je suis prêtre, mais je crois en Dieu."<sup>31</sup> It was surely time for ultramontanism, or any other *ism*, to reassert that the Church of God is not a branch of the national civil service varying with each change from the Assembly to the Consulate, from the Consulate to the Empire, and from the Empire back to the house of Bourbon.<sup>32</sup>

As we attempt to estimate the loss and gain which have resulted from all these tendencies, we must feel that neither has been the monopoly of one school, but that the imprint of the Romanticists, for both good and evil, is

<sup>31</sup> *Quatre-vingt-treize*. Vol. II, p. 3.

<sup>32</sup> The almost forgotten novels of John Galt have some sly hits at the same sort of State-sustaining religion in England. Cf. the complaint of the Rev. Micah Balwhidder that smuggling continued to flourish, though he had preached sixteen times from the text "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's (Annals of the Parish, p. 10); and Mr. Cayenne's request that his doctor should summon a clergyman to his deathbed, because, "you know, that in these times, doctor, it is the duty of every good subject to die a Christian" (*ibid.*, p. 151).

still on each branch of Christendom. Neither the Roman nor the Protestant communion has quite failed in our day to advance beyond the hardness of the old intellectualist apologetic, to realize that the basis of religion is no mere assent — however vigorously coerced — to the formulæ of a creed, and that the value-judgments of the heart rather than the cogency of a syllogism are the source of saving faith. As they think of the universe testifying to its Creator, neither can now much appreciate Addison's lines about the spacious firmament and the blue ethereal sky proclaiming their great Original, and rejoicing in Reason's ear. For they have alike come to acknowledge that external Nature taken alone seems to proclaim many different things, and that Reason without moral feeling is a poor guide. They are alike attracted rather by Wordsworth's simile of the child who holds to his ear the convolutions of a smooth-lipped shell, who hears those sonorous cadences which suggest mysterious union with its native sea, and who symbolizes that faith in a moral order which yields "authentic tidings of invisible things."

Enlightened men of all Christian creeds now alike look back with sympathetic reverence to the generations inspired by the same faith as themselves, though the dialects in which that faith expressed itself show a limitless variety, and they have alike become alive to the indecent outrage of examining with kindly appreciation the religious *nibus* in all the ethnic cults of the world while a cold and scornful glace is turned upon a thousand years of Christianity. They alike increasingly turn aside from perhaps the grossest of all ecclesiastical corruptions — the attitude of those to whom the Church meant no more than a department of the State, a more or less serviceable agency of moral restraint, a handmaid of government and a prop to those "powers that be" which, whatever their character, churchmen were once prepared to sanction as ordained of God. For this new spirit which the Romantic

impulse did so much to foster, the liberals and the conservatives in theology must be alike thankful. But, like all other reactions, the reaction from the eighteenth century has shown itself a fresh cause of discord among the very men who are most indebted to it, separating those who fear the excesses and those who are impatient with the limits of the new traditionism, marshaling in one camp those to whom the backward movement seems always in danger of going too far and in another those to whom it never seems to have courage for going far enough. The elements are now so intermingled that it has become difficult to say who is a Romanticist and who is not. For the heirs of that impulse in our own time are to be seen exalting Reason or denouncing it, despising history or appealing to it, finding in "the witness of the heart" an authentication of the things unseen and eternal or sufficient authority for each vagrant passion of the "natural" man. There is, in truth, no single movement of thought in these high fields whose fruit is not thus liable to manifold variation. As in the great parable, we must still be content to see tares and wheat growing together until the harvest. But neither must we forget the point at which that analogy stops. For the harvest of thought is one that ripens from year to year, and it is the office of successive critics, according to such light as may be in them, to wield the sickle fearlessly.